

TRAVELLING the world in search of remote tribes and championing the preservation of rare animal species in far flung places is sure to be no easy matter.

But when I meet Celine Cousteau—environmentalist, adventurer and filmmaker extraordinaire—there is no mistaking the infectious passion she has for protecting and documenting our environment.

The granddaughter of that most beloved man of the sea, Jacques Cousteau, comes from a dynasty of ocean explorers. Her father, Jean-Michel, and brother, Fabien, also pursue countless marine conservation projects around the world.

As ambassador for the Travel Corporation's TreadRight Foundation, she hopes to increase the exposure of this non-profit organization that supports some 35 sustainable projects in 27 countries.

She previously worked with Kontiki and the TreadRight Steering Committee to help vet its sustainable tourism projects with marine initiatives. For instance, she travelled to the Galapagos Islands on a science project called 'Shark Savers', in which tourists helped collect data on reef conditions.

She noticed how travel industry professionals in particular reacted in an emotional way to the project, and that they were all eager to relay their experiences to future clients when they got back home.

"This is what we're able to do just by giving somebody a taste of what's out there," she explains. "That inspiration will transpire into what they tell their travellers."

Cousteau emphasizes the extraordinary value she places on her grandfa-



Celine Cousteau is ambassador for the Travel Corporation's TreadRight Foundation.

Honouring the Legacy of Jacques

CT's Ilona Kauremszky talks to environmentalist Celine Cousteau about her work with the Travel Corporation's TreadRight Foundation

ther's legacy and explains that she sees her work as a documentarian as a megaphone to help causes that may otherwise fail to get the attention they deserve.

"I work with a lot of people who have a voice but don't have an audience. I decided to take my namesake and gift it to those people who really need a megaphone... So I try to use that and honour the work my grandfather started."

Part of honouring her legacy is supporting programs like the TreadRight Heritage Initiative, which has a commitment to the people who depend

upon heritage-based work in the destinations that the Travel Corporation promotes. In a world where developing economies account for 60 percent of the global handicraft market, it can make a big difference.

"With the Heritage Initiative we go to these places where you have smaller groups who are creating some kind of path. How can we empower them and give them the ability to do that craft better?" To Cousteau, the answer is simple: By proposing initiatives such as the rebuilding of roofs to help create better working conditions for the local

craftspeople whose role is often vital to the development of the local economy.

Then there's TreadRight's Wildlife Initiative. One of its key focuses is poaching, which has wiped 95 percent of the planet's rhino population off the face of the Earth over the last four decades.

"The Wildlife Initiative focusing on rhinos has been a focus for the Travel Corporation and that brings it home to me in a sense of legacy," Cousteau adds. "My family has three generations of doing this kind of documentary work—as does the Travel Corporation."

www.treadright.org